

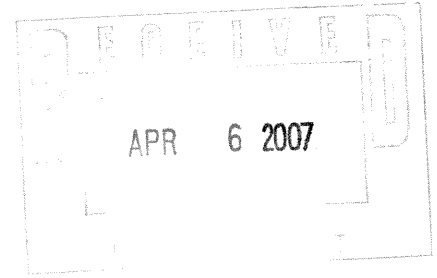


SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE

Working for strong economies, healthy communities, and a quality environment in Southeast Alaska

April 5, 2007

Mr. Jeff Ottesen
Division of Program Development
Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
PO Box 112500
Juneau, AK 99811-2500



Re: Comments on Proposed Amendment 13 to the 2006-2009 STIP.

Dear Mr. Ottesen:

The Southeast Conference Board of Directors would respectfully like to ask for two modifications to the Proposed Amendment 13 of the 2006-2009 Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP). Both projects have a direct impact to continued implementation of the Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan (SATP), and to the viability and sustainability of the Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS).

- Need #18359 – Marine Highway Ferry: Design/Construct/Purchase Ferryboats & Terminals.

Southeast Conference is requesting an increase in funding for Need #18359 to provide for the construction of one new shuttle ferry.

AMHS staff is currently working on the design of a shuttle vessel for use in the road/ferry links identified in the SATP. Southeast Conference believes that building new vessels is essential, not only for the implementation of the SATP but also as a replacement for existing vessels in the aging AMHS fleet. Inclusion of funds for the construction of one new shuttle vessel would allow the Marine Highway System to move forward in the implementation of the SATP and allow the AMHS an opportunity to test the suitability of the design and performance of the shuttle vessel prior to making a decision regarding the design of other shuttle links within the system.

The cost of the new shuttle vessel is estimated to be roughly \$50M. AMHS staff and design contractors have studied the size, speed and carrying capacity that would be required for a conventional ferry that would meet the needs for day boat operations and require little change to shore side infrastructure. Southeast Conference believes that the construction of a new shuttle vessel will provide a substantial savings in operation while providing better service to Southeast communities.

Letter to Jeff Ottesen
April 5, 2007
Page 2 of 2

- Need #3001 – Mitkof Highway Upgrade

Southeast Conference is requesting the reinsertion of Need #3001 into the 2006-2009 STIP.

The Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan identified the need to construct a terminal at the southern end of Mitkof Island and to improve the Mitkof Highway access to the terminal in order to allow the AMHS to use shuttle ferries as day boats between ports and road links. The schedule of all the north/south runs of the AMHS is currently dependant of the status of the tide in Wrangell Narrows. The substantial savings that could be realized with the operation of shuttle vessels running as day boats is contingent upon access and use of the South Mitkof Terminal. ADOT has invested millions of dollars in the construction of the South Mitkof Terminal but the substandard condition of the existing state highway precludes access to the terminal for much of the year. This Mitkof Highway Upgrade project was included in the approved 2004-2006 STIP. Southeast Conference believes that the project should be reinserted into the 2006-2009 STIP as it will allow for the continued implementation of the SATP and improved regional service.

Southeast Conference was formed with the goal of improving transportation within our region and within Alaska. We remain committed to this goal, and we believe that the shuttle ferry concept as envisioned in the SATP will result in a substantial reduction in operating costs and contribute to the viability and sustainability of the highway system in the Southeast region of Alaska. We believe that the inclusion of these two projects to Amendment 13 of the 2006/2009 STIP is vitally important to the implementation of the Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments to the proposed STIP amendment.

Sincerely,



Carol Rushmore
President

Cc: Southeast Conference Membership